

The Morse Code requirement is both a tradition and a filter and should *never* be removed.

1. As long as it remains a viable type of transmission a potential licensee should be tested on it.

2. While it is no longer a requirement for the basic license, it also works to keep HF ham radio from becoming just another Citizens' Band type radio. Already, numerous truckers have moved in to the 10-meter band, illegally, using dual band CB radios and, some, buying true (legal) ham radios and ignoring the both the license law and the usage law--the language is horrible. This "filter" is a solid piece of evidence that should be used as an acid test if these truckers, and other illegals, are ever prosecuted.

3. Most of the people that I've met who want the Morse Code requirement removed think that it will lead to opening HF to *non-code* Technicians and to the opening of all of the *Code Frequencies* to voice. I support some reorganization of the frequencies for voice but not to allow *non-code technicians* to use voice on HF. I also support requiring most of the digital communications to be removed from the voice portions and restricted to the current code only areas and the setting aside some of the code frequencies for code only and some for code and other tight digital communications only.

4. If we learn anything from Hurricanes Charlie and Katrina, let it be that the removing of a **valid type of communications** from the prerequisites for the primary backup to civil defense is counter-productive. First of all, most emergency communications are in the bands above 10 meters with the vast majority being in the 2 meter and 70 centimeter bands.

However, Hams with basic Morse Code proficiency could also be the first to provide communications with the most basic types of radio and antenna--sure, people like me who don't use it regularly will probably drive the super-fists crazy, but I could still manage to help get information in or out with a 9-volt rig on 80 meters such as names and addresses (health & welfare). Removing the requirement is killing a type of communication that can be used in an emergency by any general licensee or above.

It is my experience that only those who want to do away with the testing altogether are really behind this push to get rid of the Morse Code requirement. I have been a Volunteer Examiner for over four years and who, because I am still a General, ends up giving the Code test at just about every session I work (Generals can only test that and tests for Novices). I have heard it all in my short career, "I just can't learn it", "I'm tone deaf", and even "I'm learning disabled." But I've seen a truly learning disabled person pass the Code, sure he had to take it at least three times before finally passing, but he wanted to become a General and he did and without a medical waiver—we never allowed the writing of dots and dashes in our sessions and we didn't allow it for this fellow. It is interesting that everyone who has claimed one of these *problems* has eventually passed when they listened to us and used the ARRL tapes rather than using one of the "quick learn" programs.. But everyone who wanted to get their General or Extra has managed to pass 5WPM here in Fort Myers, FL, and I believe that we are all better for having learned about that part of communication.

As for the argument “it isn’t used”; poppycock! Most repeaters use Morse Code and all of the beacons I’ve ever heard use it. The reason for the General ticket is to get on HF and for the Extra ticket is to get on unlimited HF; or that is what most of today’s licensees appear to think. Most of the people I’ve met who want the Code removed from testing are lazy and most will never be there when they are needed for RACES (which some join then never show up), which is the reason I am a Ham. Sure, I’ve talked to around 40 countries, but 90% of my Ham communication is with the Lee County ALERT team (they changed the name to include the ARES folks who only support the ARRL’s claim of being the omnipotent amateur radio force regardless of what the law says—yup, I’m an ARRL member, too).

Ham=Public Service, or that is what it means to me. I just spent over \$7,000 to have an emergency generator and LP tank put in so I won’t lose power again like I did during Charlie; and my wife says she won’t stay without air conditioning next time. I’m not a Ham to get *Worked All [anything]*; I’m here for the same reason I did 7 years as a volunteer, sworn police officer in Virginia Beach—I believe in giving what I can to my community. When I got my first license, wd4pxf, some 29 years ago (when there were no licensees who didn’t pass the Morse Code 5WPM test), it was with the help a friend, then LT. John Kittler, (who established the MARS station on the USS Eisenhower (CVN-69)—I let my Novice license lapse when I got involved with the Virginia Beach Auxiliary Police and a friend borrowed my HW-8 (still not returned). I got my license back a few years ago and have been active with RACES since that time. I support my local clubs (well, I pay dues) and wish I didn’t understand why most of the thousands of licensees in our community aren’t more involved with emergency communications (RACES) or community involvement (ARES). If I ever get to retire I will get back with the MARS folks and help support our wonderful men and women who are serving honorably in our Armed Forces (oh, yeah, I’m a retired US Navy Chief).

Just to remind some folks, emergency service and community service are part of Part 97 and the REASON that we have the capability to talk around the country and the world. Think that is passé? Ask the Director of Lee County Emergency Operations or our local Red Cross people.

In closing; doing away with the Morse Code requirement **will not save money** and it **will not it serve any greater good**. Instead, it will do the opposite! Removal will not modernize the hobby side since the people who want it removed aren’t going to gain anything but the 40 hours of study time it takes for the average person to learn the code. These people aren’t experimenting in new forms of communications that the Morse Code requirement inhibits in any way. Finally, it is still used and, as such, should be tested on. The test should remain as the true delineation between the non-HF and the HF part of the hobby. During **the level of license most needed for emergency communication is the non-code Technician** because most emergency communications is with FM Repeater above 10 meters and not in the HF bands.

Art Nickel, k0art